

Coins

1980 U.S. proof sets to cost more, but something's new

By Roger Boye

FOR THE SECOND time in four years, Treasury Department chiefs have jacked up prices for United States proof coins — this time to \$10 for each 1980 set.

Collectors paid \$9 a set last year, and just \$7 a set in 1976. Bureaucrats blame the latest increase on higher postage and manufacturing costs.

As in the past, each 1980 set will contain six coins (cent through dollar) that are the "pick of the litter," the shiniest specimens government machines can produce.

But new for 1980 will be a redesigned hard-plastic holder that protects the coins. U.S. Mint executives describe it as a "sliding type" without the easy-to-break hinges on the holders used in past years.

To order proof sets, send a check made payable to Bureau of the Mint, 55 Mint St., San

Francisco, Cal. 94175. Be sure to include your name, address, and zip code, and remember that a maximum of five sets may be ordered per person.

The government will accept orders until May 30 unless it receives an unusually large number. Last year, collectors sent in orders for more than 3.7 million sets, forcing the Mint director to declare a "sell out" two weeks before the planned cutoff date. All 1980 proof coins will be made in San Francisco and will carry an "S" mint mark.

● Coin experts are testing a special brass-colored alloy that could be used to make Susan B. Anthony dollar coins as early as next year.

The alloy — 95 per cent copper, 3 per cent aluminum, and 2 per cent silicon — is being examined for its resistance to corrosion and wear, according to a report in *Coin World*.

Many people have panned the Anthony dollar since it was released last year, complaining that the coin is the same color and almost the same size as a quarter. A recent Gallup poll indicated that the public might be more likely to use the coin if it were brass-colored.

The director of the U.S. Mint has promised that even if the coin's color turns yellow, the current size and shape will remain the same. Also, Congress must approve any change in the Anthony dollar's metal makeup.

● With all of the excitement over gold and silver prices this year, it's little wonder that hobby leaders selected "Numismatics Is More Than Just Bullion" as the theme of the 1980 National Coin Week.

For seven days starting today, coin buffs are to remind their friends that collecting is a great way to learn about history, art, and geography, as well as to possibly make money.

The annual coin week observance is sponsored by the American Numismatic Association, the nation's largest organization of coin collectors. U.S. Rep. Frank Annunzio (D., Ill.) has introduced a resolution in Congress to designate officially the third week in April as National Coin Week.

● "Where are my Carson City silver dollars?"

That's the all-too-familiar question that I continue to receive from Tribune readers who have ordered some of the century-old coins from the government.

Once again, the simple answer is, be patient. The General Services Administration received more than 350,000 orders, and it will be at least four more weeks before they are all processed. And it will be even longer than that — perhaps not until Aug. 31 — before all 900,000 coins are mailed.